EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE FARMING FOR SUSTAINABILITY KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PAYMENTS REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2025

S.R. 2025 No. 40

1. Introduction

1.1. This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to accompany the Statutory Rule (details above) which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

1.2. The Statutory Rule is made under section 5 (2B) of the Agriculture Act (Northern Ireland) Act 1949 and is subject to the negative resolution procedure.

2. Purpose

2.1. The purpose of this Statutory Rule is to introduce the Farming for Sustainability – (Knowledge) Scheme. The Scheme provides for payments to be made by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to eligible farm businesses in relation to hosting visits as part of the scheme. Also included is a specific payment to eligible farm businesses within Business Sustainability Groups to support learning both individually and as a group.

3. Background

3.1. A number of work areas are currently being developed as components of DAERA's Sustainable Agriculture Programme, the majority of which require change to take place within farm businesses to achieve the intended outcomes. It is expected that these policy areas will impact upon almost all of the 26,000 farm businesses in NI and there is a requirement to make farmers aware of these developments and the likely impact on their businesses. Knowledge transfer is a critical tool to help deliver this change.

3.2. As part of the previous NI Rural Development Programme, DAERA/CAFRE developed and delivered a number of schemes involving awareness training (Farm Family Key Skills) and Peer to Peer Learning (Business Development Groups) These schemes have been successful in meeting their aims concerning increasing knowledge in participating individuals and improving business performance in members of peer learning groups. The aim of the new proposal is to build on this success and widen the reach of the provision.

4. Consultation

4.1. Consultations have been held with the Agricultural Policy Stakeholder Group as part of the ongoing engagement regarding the Sustainable Agriculture Programme.

5. Equality Impact

5.1. In accordance with DAERAs obligations under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the potential equality impact of the statutory rule has been assessed. Minor disability impacts have been identified under the equality and human rights screening procedures and these can be offset by introducing mitigating measures.

6. Regulatory Impact

6.1. As these regulations are to introduce a scheme with financial support for the preparation required to host farm visits and promote information sharing within a group learning environment, there should be minimal costs to participant farm businesses.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. The Farming For Sustainability (Knowledge) Scheme is due to be funded through the Sustainable Agriculture Programme. The NI Executive has agreed to ear-mark agriculture, agri-environment, fisheries and rural development funding that had been baselined in the block grant as part of the wider agreement on the Draft budget 2025-26.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

8.1. The Regulations do not have any human rights implications, nor are they incompatible with EU law. The Regulations are therefore deemed to comply with the requirements of section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

9. EU Implications

9.1. This legislation does not transpose a European Directive.

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

10.1. N/A

11. Additional Information

11.1. Not applicable